

The tropical disturbance, which later became Typhoon Ellis, was first noted on satellite and synoptic data on 25 June 1979. The surface/gradient-level analysis showed that a broad monsoon trough had developed between Guam and the Philippine Islands. At upper-levels, a Tropical Upper Tropospheric Trough (TUTT) was oriented northeast-southwest between the Volcano Islands and the central Philippine Islands. This TUTT allowed excellent upper-level outflow to the northeast and was expected to induce intensification of the tropical disturbance southeast of the TUTT axis. Therefore, a Tropical Cyclone Formation Alert (TCFA) was issued for the area valid at 270000Z. However, significant development did not occur. Reconnaissance aircraft could find only a very broad surface circulation with relatively high surface pressures. The surface circulation drifted under the TUTT and the associated convection was suppressed; development was thereby thwarted. Based on the superposition of the TUTT and the surface circulation and the fact that the overall satellite signature had not improved, the TCFA was cancelled at 282000Z.

The area was closely monitored, and when satellite imagery showed increased convective development and surface data showed decreasing pressures and increasing winds, a second TCFA was issued valid at 300600Z. Subsequent aircraft investigation revealed a minimum sea-level pressure of 1000 mb and surface winds in excess of 35 kt (18 m/sec). Based on this new information, the first warning on TS Ellis was issued at 010000Z July. Ellis was in a favorable position at that time and steady intensification occurred over the next 2 days.

For his entire lifetime, Ellis followed an uncomplicated, classic west-northwest track at near climatological speeds ranging from 9-14 kt (17-26 km/hr). Post-analysis indicates that Ellis was moving under the influence of the east-southeasterly steering flow on the southern edge of the subtropical mid-tropospheric ridge. Ellis' nearly straight track is due primarily to the fact that this ridge did not change in intensity or orientation during the period.

Ellis reached typhoon strength at 021200Z and a maximum intensity of 85 kt (44 m/sec) at 030000Z (Fig. 3-06-1). Continued intensification was anticipated, but a slow weakening trend was actually observed. As with Tropical Storm Faye, this weakening was associated with a drastic change in the upper-level flow pattern.

During Ellis' developing stage, the TUTT was located to the north-northwest and was providing the necessary outflow channel to the northeast. By 020000Z, however, an upper-level anticyclone over central China began to ridge eastward, forcing the TUTT to the northeast. Strong upper-level north-easterly winds associated with this anticyclone began to exert pressure on Ellis, shearing the convective activity to the southwest. Continuing west-northwest in this shearing environment, Ellis weakened steadily. By the time he was in the South China Sea, Ellis had weakened to tropical storm strength and was a completely exposed low-level circulation (Fig. 3-06-2).

With winds of 54 kt (26 m/sec), Ellis made landfall on the Chinese coast at 060000Z, 164 nm (296 km) southwest of Hong Kong and dissipated rapidly over land thereafter.

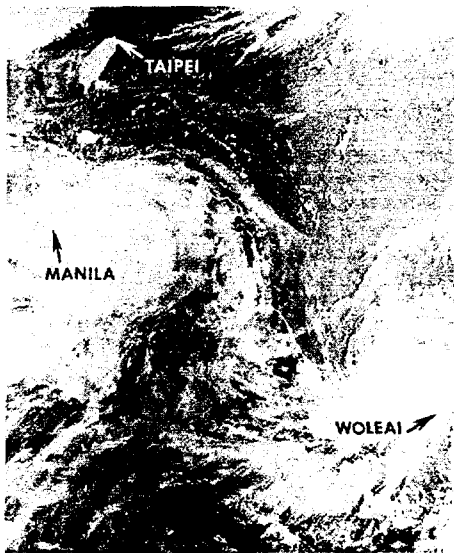


FIGURE 3-06-1. Typhoon Ellis (left) at maximum intensity of 85 kt (44 m/sec), 2 July 1979, 2356Z. TS Faye (right) is developing north of Woleai. (DMSP imagery)



FIGURE 3-06-2. Tropical Storm Ellis as an exposed low-level circulation in the South China Sea, 5 July 1979, 0101Z. (DMSP imagery from Det 5, 1WW, Clark AB, RP)